

2-16-2005

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Recommended Citation

Lawrence University, "Lawrence University Hosts Town Hall Forum with Four Black Authors" (2005). *Press Releases*. Paper 370.
<http://lux.lawrence.edu/pressreleases/370>

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Lawrence University Hosts Town Hall Forum with Four Black Authors

Posted on: February 16th, 2005 by Rick Peterson

Four distinguished writers will participate in a town hall style forum at Lawrence University Monday, Feb. 21 as part of the 2005 Black Author's College Tour. The forum, focusing on issues that shape and impact the African-American community, will be held at 7 p.m. in Science Hall, Room 102 on the Lawrence campus.

Participating in the forum will be authors Brandon Massey, Jamise Dames, Lois Benjamin and Yasmin Shiraz. Each will give a brief talk addressing a specific issue related to the African-American community and then take part in an open discussion with audience members.

A resident of Atlanta, Ga., Massey will address issues of the black man's challenge in America. He self-published his first novel, "Thunderland," in 1999 and a revised edition was republished in 2002 by Kensington Publishing. His second book, "Dark Corner," a vampire novel set in rural Mississippi, was released in January, 2004, while "Dark Dreams: A Collection of Horror and Suspense by Black Writers," was published last August. His latest work, the supernatural thriller "Within the Shadows," is scheduled for release in June.

Dames, a published songwriter and former recording artist, will share her insights on the importance of sustaining self esteem in the black community. She is the author of the national best seller "Momma's Baby Daddy's Maybe" (2003) and "Pushing Up Daisies" (2004). A graduate of the University of Connecticut with a degree in English and an emphasis in creative writing, Dames is currently pursuing graduate studies.

Benjamin, a professor of sociology at Virginia's Hampton

University, will speak on the secrets of the black elite. She is the author of “The Black Elite: Facing the Color Line in the Twilight of the Twentieth Century,” for which she interviewed 100 prominent African-Americans. She also served as editor of the 1997 book “Black Women in the Academy,” a collection of essays written by 33 black female academics and administrators from around the country who discuss their experiences of working in higher education in America. Benjamin earned a Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley.

Shiraz, a journalist and empowerment speaker, will examine the impact of hip-hop culture on the African-American community. She is the author of the 2004 book “The Blueprint for My Girls” and is working on a sequel, “The Blueprint For My Girls In Love.”

As an entertainment reporter, Shiraz has written for a variety of publications, including Black Enterprise, Upscale, Impact and the Electronic Urban Report and has interviewed numerous celebrities, including Sean “P. Diddy” Combs, singers Jay-Z, Queen Latifah and Brandy, actors Jada Pinkett-Smith and Martin Lawrence and attorney Johnnie Cochran, among others.

The Black Authors Tour program is sponsored by Lawrence’s Office of Multicultural Affairs and is part of the college’s celebration of Black History Month.